



SUCCESS CENTER: Strengthening Math Skills

BASIC STUDY SKILLS

The same study skills needed to succeed in other classes apply to mathematics as well:

- **Attend every class.** Arrive 5-10 minutes before class begins. Listen attentively, take notes by hand.
- **Make sure you can log into Blackboard and MyMathLab.** Drop by the Success Center for SWIC technology help.
- **Ask questions.** If you still don't understand, write questions down to ask after class. Ask the teacher or visit the Success Center.
- **Start memorizing formulas and their applications** after each class and test yourself daily with flashcards (write the formula on one side and the meaning or use on the other side). Meet with a Success Center Learning Specialist or tutor to learn effective strategies for memorizing information.
- **Schedule 2-3 hours of study OUTSIDE of class for each hour IN CLASS.**

If your Math class is 4-credit hours, plan to spend 8-12 hours OUTSIDE of class each week completing assignments. If your math course is 5-credit hours, plan to spend 10-15 hours of study each week.

- **Read the syllabus** and write test dates and other class requirements in your planner.
 - For help setting up your student planner or phone calendar, the Success Center will help you get started.

IMPROVING MATH SKILLS AND TEST TAKING TIPS

- **Complete your assignments each day**, even if they are not graded.
- **Divide lengthy assignments into several 30-45 minute sessions rather than** completing the work in one long sitting.
- **Keep a positive mindset** and avoid negative self-talk.
- **Determine WHAT** the question is asking **and WHY** you perform a specific operation.
- For word problems, **analyze and make a picture** before you start your work.
- **Translate the wording into a numeric equation**, and vice versa. For example, *the square of the hypotenuse of a right triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides* can be written as: $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$.
- **Neatness makes it easier to recheck** your work.
- **Look for key words:**

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|--|---|
| + , sum, increase, total = ADDITION | - , less than, reduced, difference = SUBTRACTION |
| x , of, times, multiplied by = MULTIPLICATION | ÷ , per, out of, ratio of, quotient of, percent = DIVISION |

- **Complete practice tests** under the same conditions as you will take the test. Use time drills with a study partner.
- **Scan the entire test, prioritize items** on the test, and pace yourself. **Read the problem part by part, not all at one time.** Make sure you understand each part before moving on, and answer the question that is being asked.
- **Complete the easiest questions first.**
- **Estimate** what the answer might be so that you have a general idea of what your final answer should be.
- **DO NOT SKIP STEPS.** Start from the beginning and write out each step.
- **Double check your calculator work** immediately. Write down your first answer to compare to the re-check.
- If calculators are *not* permitted, **check your work by performing the opposite operation.** For example, if you are asked to multiply, check your work by dividing.
- **If you get stuck on a problem**, mark it on the test or scratch paper as a reminder to come back to it later.

Bring your graded quizzes and tests to the Success Center and work with a tutor to correct any errors and understand why the mistakes were made.

Sources:

Brown, Peter C., Roediger, Mark A., & McDaniel Henry L. *Make it Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014.

"Preparing for and Taking Math Exams." *Testing with Success Series, Study Guides and Strategies*, <http://www.studygs.net/tsttak6.htm>. Accessed 16 Jun. 2017.